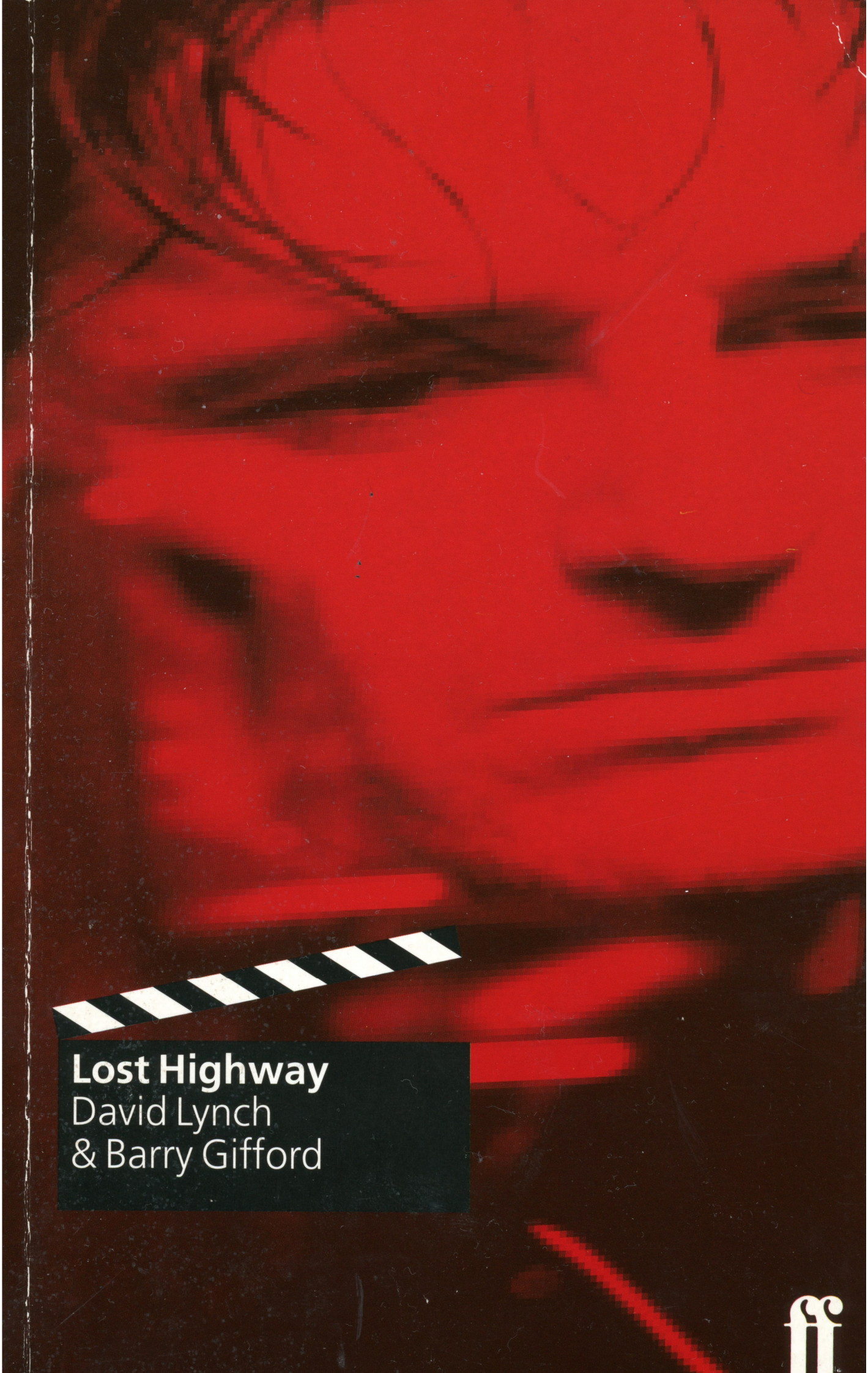

Lost Highway

David Lynch
& Barry Gifford

ff

INTRODUCTION
Funny How Secrets Travel

CHRIS RODLEY: *It's been four years since you made your last feature film* Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me. *Why so long?*
DAVID LYNCH: I tried to get some things going, but for one reason or other nothing ever happened. It's a matter of finding something that you fall in love with. You can't make a movie for money or any reason other than that you fall in love with the material, and you're excited about it. Otherwise you'd never be able to sustain the trip.

So where did the idea for Lost Highway *come from?*
Well, Barry Gifford wrote a book called *Night People*, and in it was the phrase 'Lost Highway'. I don't know when it happened, but I mentioned to Barry that I just *loved* this title 'Lost Highway' and that we should write something together. And he said, 'Well, let's do it.' But nothing happened for a long time.

What was it about that phrase that excited your imagination?
It's just a dreamy thing – 'Lost Highway'. It evokes all kinds of things in your head. And then later on I found out that Hank Williams had written a song called 'Lost Highway'.

Given that you were both starting with nothing more than two words to go on, did it come together easily at first?
No. We both sort of had our own ideas about what *Lost Highway* might be. We got together over coffee and I told Barry something I was thinking about and he told me some things he was thinking about. And we each hated each other's ideas! And we hated our own ideas after that! Then I told Barry about this series of things that came to me one night. The very last night of shooting *Fire Walk With Me* these things shot into my head. I was driving home with Mary Sweeney and I told her about them. What I told her sort of scared her and it sort of scared me too. And when I told them to Barry he said, 'Jeez, I really like that,' and that was the start of a brand-new direction.

What came to you exactly?
It was like the first third of the picture maybe, minus some scenes we had in the final script. A couple are living in a house and a video tape is delivered. When they look at it, it's of the front of their house. They don't think anything of it and then they get another one, and this one is going through the living room, and watching them sleep in bed. This thing I had went all the way up to the fist hitting Fred in the police station – to suddenly being in another place and not knowing how he got there or what is wrong.

Is it possible to say how these images and ideas occur to you?
Well, you're sitting alone quietly, and something unfolds in your mind. You can't figure on how things happen, but once in a while something like a movie unravels before you. You can sit in a chair – and I love just sitting in a chair and going off – and you can float away. And sometimes when I'm going to sleep, especially, or sitting in a chair with my eyes closed . . . I drift through this one space where images just come, and I'm not prompting them. In fact if I start thinking about it they stop. And because I don't judge them and don't think about them too much, they just come. They're usually in a series of things. And that's what happened.

The world is getting noisier and more and more frantic in the atmosphere, and so even sitting still is, you know, a problem. My friend Bushnell Keeler always said, 'You need to have four hours of uninterrupted time to do one hour of good painting.' If you're rushed, you just can't think and do it. You've got to fall into it, and you've got to really fall in deep in order to go to this place where you catch ideas.

And then, with the opening of the film – 'Dick Laurent is dead' – I woke up one morning and the intercom rang. A man says 'Dave!' and I say 'Yeah' and he says 'Dick Laurent is dead'. And I say 'What?' and, you know, there was no one there. I can't see the front of the house unless I go all the way to the other end and look out of the big window. And there was no one there. I don't know who Dick Laurent is. All I do know is he's dead!

No one's going to believe that story!
That's a true story! That's a true story! I swear to you.

The scripts for Eraserhead, Blue Velvet *and* Wild at Heart *were your own. What is it like writing with someone else?*
I wrote with Chris de Vore and Eric Bergren on *The Elephant Man*, with Mark Frost on *Twin Peaks*, Bob Engels on *Fire Walk With Me* and now Barry on this, and it's good, because you can check up on each other. If it doesn't inhibit free thinking it's very good because it moves faster and it moves more on course with two people – if it's the right chemistry. If I was working with Mark Frost on *Lost Highway* it would be different. Barry brings something which is just Barry. And the combo produces something. It's just the nature of the two of us.

From the little I know of Barry Gifford it seems you have at least one thing in common: neither of you likes to talk too much about the 'meaning' of your work, and you both avoid offering personal interpretation. Is that right?
Yeah. On *Lost Highway* we never talked about meaning or anything. We seemed to be in sync on where we were going, so a lot was left unsaid. We talked, but that can be dangerous. If things get too specific, the dream stops. There are things that happen sometimes that open up a door and let you soar out and feel a bigger thing.

What was it about Gifford's work that first attracted you?
The first book I read of his was *Wild at Heart*, and when I read it I was thinking that my friend Monty Montgomery was going to be directing it. He wanted me to executive produce or help him out. And I jokingly said to Monty, 'What if I like this and want to direct it myself?' And he said, 'Well then you'll direct it.' And I said, 'OK, cool.' And so I read it and *doggone*, I really fell in love with it. I fell in love with Sailor and Lula.

So was it the kind of people that he wrote about, the situations or the actual writing style?
I like a certain sensibility that Barry has about things. He understands a world that I like – and he likes as well. And I really like the characters he writes about. I like what they say, and they've got a kind of a coolness and a kind of hipness to them. And there's an honesty there, too. Barry is also a pretty sparse writer, so there's lots of room for me to take off: his work suggests

so much. A lot of the things I had in *Wild at Heart* I'm sure Barry didn't have in mind, but for the sake of the film – and my own enthusiasm and love for the ideas suggested – I fleshed out certain things and Barry was real supportive of that. He didn't have a problem at all.

Gifford has said that maybe the balance between the two of you is that you make the ordinary seem extraordinary and that he makes the extraordinary seem ordinary. Do you agree?
Yeah, his friend Vinny came up with that comparison. Those things sound good, you know, but I have no idea.

Gifford wasn't involved at all in the screenplay for Wild at Heart, *and later you directed two short teleplays he wrote for your HBO series* Hotel Room. *You've never written as a team before. In creating and writing* Lost Highway *together, did that affect how you approached each other in terms of roles?*
No. Barry understands that a script is a kind of blueprint; that when you begin to cast, find locations and shoot, the film has got a way of maybe becoming different from what he was probably thinking.

The script and the movie feel very much like the tip of an iceberg. Both are full of clues and possibilities, but certain events are only referred to obliquely. Did the two of you talk about the script in terms of what would – and what wouldn't – be made explicit?
No. I don't know about Barry, but for me every single thing comes with a feeling. An idea comes complete and you just have to stay true to those ideas all the way through the process of making the film. In the script there are a lot of things that aren't said because Barry and I both knew that I was going to be directing it, although I think the script works great. But it's not the final thing. If it was, you'd just release a script and you'd be done!

Ideas are the best thing going. Somewhere there's all the ideas, and they're sitting there and once in a while one will bob up and the idea is made known suddenly. Something is seen and known and felt all at once, and along with it comes a burst of enthusiasm and you fall in love with it. It's *unbelievable* that you could get ideas and that someone could give you money to make a film from them.

The first third of the film – 'at home' with Fred and Renee – is like being in a pressure-cooker, or in someone else's nightmare. Was that the intention?
Yeah. That's the feel of the whole thing. It's about a couple who feel that somewhere, just on the border of consciousness – or on the other side of that border – are bad, bad problems. But they can't bring them into the real world and deal with them. So this bad feeling is just hovering there, and the problems abstract themselves and become other things. It just becomes like a bad dream. There are unfortunate things that happen to people, and this story is about that. It depicts an unfortunate occurrence, and gives you the feeling of a man in trouble. A thinking man in trouble.

If the story is, at least on one level, about a man who may – or may not – have murdered his wife for her infidelity, both the script and the film refuse to offer any clear evidence of her 'guilt'.
Right, but that's the way it is most of the time: before the hard evidence there are always suspicions. Unless you're a total paranoid, and even then it's as real as if it happened in the poor person's mind. So you don't need hard evidence really. And Fred is quite sensitive [*laughs*].

Have you ever experienced feelings and emotions similar to Fred Madison's?
We can all relate to almost any kind of human behavior, no matter how bizarre. How that can happen, I don't know, but it's in this human behavior box. We all sort of know it.

You once said that you feel closest to Henry in Eraserhead, *and also Jeffrey in* Blue Velvet. *Fred Madison isn't so different from them, is he?*
No, he's not. He's lost in confusion and darkness, where fear is in the driver's seat. And I'm certainly there. Lost in darkness and confusion.

It's not indicated in the script, but in the film Fred and Renee's house has an uncertain geography. It seems that it might be endless: that once you step into it, you're entering some potentially vast, dark labyrinth. Dorothy Vallen's apartment in Blue Velvet *is a little like that.*
Right. And that's the way it is in relationships sometimes. You just don't know how they're going to go: if there's an end to them or if

there's just more trouble. But all those things are not intellectualized. You have so many choices, so when you're setting up something, you just keep on working till it feels correct. As soon as it matches up in feeling, and all the moves and the look and the sound reinforce all that, you're on the right track.

That part of the movie also feels similar to Eraserhead *in the slow, determined way that both Patricia Arquette and Bill Pullman move. Did you do a lot of rehearsal with them, as you did with Jack Nance for* Eraserhead*?*

Yeah. Most directors like things to move a hair faster than I like. Making pictures has become too fast. Many pictures skim along the surface. They can't delve deep, because if you're water-skiing at fifty miles an hour, you're not going to go beneath the surface. But if the boat stops – or even slows up – down you go in the deep water. And that's where the good ideas are. In order to slow things down you have to start talking not so much about *why* it has to be this or that way, but about *movements* – where it goes and how it feels – interior thinking. If you start in the interior, your moves will slow down. Once an actor tunes into that they will automatically do it correctly.

There isn't much dialogue in the film to help them, is there?

No, but every word has got to be said a certain way. And every move has to be a certain way. It's not that I tell them how to say lines – I never do that. I just start talking, and pretty soon you don't have to talk so much.

It's one of your toughest movies in terms of understanding the story: what is really happening and what is imagined. Did you want to confuse the audience?

No. No. It needs to be a certain way and it's not to confound, it's to feel the mystery. Like someone said, 'Mystery is good, confusion is bad, and there's a big difference between the two.' I don't like talking about things too much because, unless you're a poet, when you talk about it, a big thing becomes smaller. But the clues are all there for a correct interpretation, and I keep saying that in a lot of ways it's a straight-ahead story. There are only a few things that are a hair off.

Some things in life are not so understandable. But when things

in films are not so understandable people become worried. And yet they are, in *some* way, understandable. There are things that cinema can do that are very difficult to talk about. You have to have someone trusting you a lot to get into these things that cinema can do but that don't happen too often. Those things could never happen in a committee atmosphere where everyone in the room has to understand every single thing in the script. It gets so far away from the magic of cinema it's *unbelievable*. And the thing becomes *only* what it is. Nothing more. There's not one little window for an abstraction or a dream. It's just like a rock. When CiBy-2000 read the script, they had some questions. But then they said that seeing those things in the film made them more understandable than when they read the script.

On the front page of the script you described Lost Highway *as – among other things – a twenty-first century noir horror film.*
Yeah. That's just sort of baloney. You know what I mean? It's a dangerous thing to say what a picture is. I don't like pictures that are one genre only, so this is a combination of things. It's a kind of horror film, a kind of a thriller, but basically it's a mystery. That's what it is. A mystery.

But it's a big problem. In studios, more often than not these days, it's not one person making the decisions: it's a committee. And if there's money at risk, their jobs are at stake and they become afraid. So they need to understand what it is they're going to make. So it decreases the chance for any abstractions. Abstractions are not something you want to throw money at!

Is mystery important to you?
That there is more going on than meets the eye is a HUGE THRILL. Let's say that you could see something and mistake it for something else – a man walking across a window at night with something in his hand. Maybe you saw exactly what you thought you saw, and all of your imaginings are exactly what was going on. But more often than not, if you were actually able to go in there and see what was really happening, it would be a let-down from your imagination trip. So I think fragments of things are pretty interesting. You can dream the rest. Then you are a participant. We know that things are going on. Not in every house, but enough. Things that we can't even imagine are going on. And

that's why all these talk-shows on TV are happening. People come on and say these things. It's like a cleansing. It's like you always sort of knew it, and now they're naming it and showing it. But therefore a lot of mystery is going away.

Going into something, like a story, there's so much more to discover. Like scientists. They start on the surface of something, and then they start delving. They get down to the sub-atomic particles and their world is now very abstract. They're like abstract painters in a way. It'd be hard to talk to them because they're way down in there.

I learned that just beneath the surface there's another world, and still different worlds as you dig deeper. I knew it as a kid, but I couldn't find the proof. It was just a feeling. There is goodness in those blue skies and flowers, but another force – a wild pain and decay – also accompanies everything.

Playing both Renee and Alice, Patricia Arquette told me she became very confused at one point. At first she thought she would be playing two different women, but was then told by you that they were the same woman. Added to which, the script also suggests that one of them dies. [*Laughs*] Well, as an actor, there's something about giving yourself up and being somebody else. You have to have a certain kind of mind, and that certain kind of mind can enjoy and relish in abstractions and strangeness. All it takes is a little bit of trust and a little bit of a clue and it suddenly becomes a mystery. To an actor it's a beautiful thing. And then each actor builds a story inside to support what they're going to do. It would be interesting to see what stories they were building. But they have to build some interior thing to make a word come out or a look come out truthfully. And so you help each other get to that place. But I never said much about the meanings of things. We mostly talked about little fragments of thoughts that could make it correct.

Arquette's own rationale for Lost Highway *goes something like this: a man murders his wife because he thinks she's being unfaithful. He can't deal with the consequences of his actions and has a kind of breakdown. In this breakdown he tries to imagine a better life for himself, but he's so fucked up that even this imaginary life goes wrong. The mistrust and madness in him is so deep that even his fantasies end in a nightmare.* But why though? Because of this person: the woman. No matter

which place you first start walking, eventually you're going to walk into trouble – if you're walking with the wrong person.

Meaning her character?

Yeah.

Obviously the story Arquette built for herself worked for her: a man who imagines himself as a younger, virile guy, meeting a woman who wants him all the time instead of being shut out, but whose fantasy life also falls apart.

That's exactly right.

Do you ever think of actors when you're writing? Or is that the wrong way round?

It is the wrong way around, but I think I always wanted Bill Pullman for Fred Madison. He's a kind of regular guy, and he's smart. I think Barry and I talked about Bill when we were writing. It's really helpful to picture somebody. You get a picture of someone anyway, but with a picture of an actor it's very specific and you can see them talking and it's, Oh they wouldn't be able to say that. Or they would, but it wouldn't be right.

Do you bother to do readings with them?

No. I hate them. I don't think I've ever had an actor read. I just talk to them, get a feel for them and I can tell. Reading is weird, because then I want to start rehearsing! And it's unfair on them; an embarrassment in a weird way. Every reading is only a point of departure. From there it goes somewhere else, so how can a cold reading be any good? One out of a hundred actors would be exactly what you wanted. You could get there, but someone is still more right for that part than anyone else. If you find one of them you're happy.

Have you ever had a particularly bad reaction to a script from an actor?

Once. For Frank Booth I sent the script to an actor, I can't remember his name, but he became *violent* in his response. And I think even after the film came out he said very bad things about it. People misunderstand. If you have violence in your film they think that you're condoning it or spreading it, and it's just not that way. You can't have a movie where everyone's telling nice little stories and knitting. It doesn't rock any boat, but it's not happening. A

very bad reaction is horrible because you identify so much with the script.

But a great thing about actors is the questions they ask. The problems they have with a character can help you immensely. Before Isabella Rossellini ever came on to *Blue Velvet* I gave it to this actress who I really respected. She was seriously considering the role, but eventually said she couldn't do it. But in talking to her, a lot of things were changed in that character. She really helped me, whether she knows it or not.

Mr Eddy seems to be in a fine Lynch tradition of very nasty villains. The tailgating scene in both the script and the film is also reminiscent of certain sequences in Wild at Heart, *in which inappropriate and extreme violence suddenly breaks lose.*

Yeah. And Robert Loggia was *great*. He's just *great*. Usually actors are worried about going 'over-the-top', right? Robert tells this story about how I kept going up to him during that scene and saying, 'Robert, I can't hear you, you're whispering, you're whispering.' I was serious. He would start off very, very loud, and then he'd get down in close, and he'd start whispering. So he'd say, 'I'm *not* whispering!' And I'd say, 'Robert, you're whispering.' And so he was going crazy inside himself. He's saying, 'What does this guy *want* from me?' And then he hit this one particular take. He fell into this realm of over-the-topness, and got the rage. But he's always had it. He was incredible. Always, when I saw Robert Loggia I saw an anger and a power there, like with Anthony Hopkins in *The Elephant Man*. But he wasn't really manifesting that.

Robert wanted to play Frank Booth's part in *Blue Velvet*. I can't remember the particulars, but we were testing this actress from Australia as a possible Dorothy, and I got this young actor and said, 'I want you to be Jeffrey, because we're testing, but you're not playing the part in the movie,' and he says, 'I know that. No problem, happy to do it. We'll do something later.' Robert Loggia had agreed to come in to play Frank, knowing that it *could* be him, but it probably wouldn't be. I wanted my casting agent Joanna Ray to make sure people understood. Unfortunately, I started out testing the Jeffrey character and I got really involved with rehearsing and stuff. I ran out of time and they were throwing us

out, so I had to go out to tell Robert that it wasn't going to happen. And he got *so* upset it wasn't funny! And he remembered that.

So when they were both shooting on *Independence Day*, Bill Pullman started talking to Robert Loggia and gave him this script of *Lost Highway* because Bill had an idea that Robert would be perfect for Mr Eddy. Robert loved the things, but he said there was no way he'd be able to do it, because I would've remembered how upset he got at me. But it was just his getting upset that time that made him perfect for this role!

That first third of the film repeatedly uses fade-ins and fade-outs – from and to black. Sometimes after a single scene. Why did you use that device for a particularly tense part of the story?
Well, I've always loved fade-outs and fade-ins, but again I don't know why. I'd just be telling you baloney. But things go in steps. They need to rise up, take place, and go away, and there needs to be some little moment, a little wind, and then another thing comes up. Just like little thoughts. And they can get you into trouble, you know, those thoughts. [*Laughs*]

Can you say something about the different styles in the film? The first third is very spare, quiet and full of dread, but then it changes radically in look, feel and pace after we leave Fred and Renee's house.
Well, there's not really a change of style, there's changes of people and location. There are different sections, and again, each one has to be a certain way. So I guess if there's a change of style, or appears to be, it's dictated by each section.

A film is like a pyramid. In the beginning you can go slowly, and as you go along you can never have that same amount of slowness. Things rush and it may *seem* the same amount of slowness, but in actuality it's much faster, just because you've been going for some time. The feelings, if you're listening to them, take you in the form of a pyramid. You don't see it when you're editing because you're editing in pieces and you think it can go this slow. Then when you see it all together you just about *die*. And you start hacking. Most of your hacking is in the last third. Film is *flying!*

There are many scenes in the script that didn't make it to the final film. What influenced the decisions to drop them?

It's action and reaction all the way along, so the film's never finished till it's finished. It's always a work-in-progress until the very end. So it's dangerous to fall in love with scenes. But it's so important not to drop something completely. You might really need some part of it. You'd be surprised at the things that stay in and the things that go out.

We had this execution scene in the prison. Fred Madison is in his cell and he's reacting to Sammy G. walking to his execution, and the priest and several lawyers and little entourages are going down the hall right outside his cell door. There were also some reaction shots of him just imagining the execution while it was going on. And because we shot those things, even though the execution was dropped, those shots of Fred reacting were perfect for his transition into Pete Dayton. So you never know how things are going to end up. One shot of a scene that's 99 percent cut out stays in the film and says it all.

In the warden's office there was also a scene of Pete's Mum and Dad coming in and the warden and Doctor Smordin and Captain Luneau all talking – for five pages. That's now down to three or four cuts and no one says anything.

But that discussion with Pete Dayton's family would have confirmed what an audience thought it saw: that Fred Madison had inexplicably changed into Pete Dayton in his cell.

Well it did and it didn't. But you already know that. That's in the movie. It's the wrong guy in the cell. The discussion in that scene was trying to explain the unexplainable. It raised more questions than it answered. So it didn't have to be there. In fact, it was harmful for it to be there and I didn't know that when Barry and I wrote the script.

CiBy-2000's pre-publicity for the movie encapsulates the entire synopsis in three words: 'a psychogenic fugue'. Were you ever aware that such a mental condition actually existed?

No. Barry and I didn't know what that was. Deborah Wuliger, the unit publicist on the picture, happened to find it in some medical journal or something. She showed it to us, and it was like 'Lost Highway'. Not literally, but an interior thing can happen that's very similar. A certain mental disturbance. But it sounds like such a beautiful thing – 'psychogenic fugue'. It has music and it has a

certain *force* and dream-like quality. I think it's beautiful, even if it didn't mean anything.

More revealing than 'psychogenic' – which basically means 'having origin in the mind' – is the definition of 'fugue'. Although it's primarily a musical term, it completely describes the picture: one theme starts and is then taken up by a second theme in answer. But the first continues to supply an accompaniment or counter theme. And the term is used to describe a form of amnesia, which is a flight from reality. Don't both definitions perfectly describe the complex relationship between Fred and Pete?

Exactly. That's why I think they called it a 'psychogenic *fugue*' because it goes from one thing, segues to another, and then I think it comes back again. And so it *is* 'Lost Highway'. And whether those people who have this illness come back again or not, or how long the fugue lasts, I don't know. But it gets pretty crazy with two themes churning, finding a way to separate and then come back together again.

You could therefore describe Lost Highway *uniquely as a film that truly echoes a musical term. A real musical! Did you and Angelo Badalamenti discuss the score in terms of a fugue?*

We never really got into that. Fugues make me feel insane. I can only listen to a certain amount of a fugue and then I feel like I'm gonna blow up from the inside out. You don't want to stay in your body. Or you'd want to if your body wasn't doing what it was doing. But I would like to see Angelo do a fugue on a pipe organ, you know? [*Laughs*]

Given the near-perfect correspondences between a psychogenic fugue and Lost Highway*, it's hard to imagine that you didn't read up on it when working on the script.*

No, no, no, no. Certain things happen, ideas come along and they string themselves together and they form a whole and then a theme or something becomes apparent – if you wanna look for it. But if you're true to these ideas, you don't need to know. If you start off with a theme and say, 'We're gonna amplify this theme,' and you do like a story about teenage rape, that to me is completely backwards: then you've got to force things to fit. The other way, you don't know what it is. It just comes together and

then later you find out. But meanwhile you're falling in love with it. You just know somewhere that it's right for you.

As in so much of your work, Lost Highway *focuses on the home: on a domestic situation in a small neighborhood. And in that home, sound is very important. Fred and Renee's house is full of deep rumbles, like an imminent earthquake. Trouble from the very core of the planet. Can you say something about your use of sound in the film?*
The home is a place where things can go wrong, and the sound comes out of that idea. If you have a room, and it's really quiet, or if there's no sound, you're just looking at this room. If you want a certain kind of mood, you find the sound that creeps into that silence: that starts giving you a feeling. And there are also sounds that kill a mood. So it's getting rid of everything that you don't want, and then building up all the things that are gonna support it and make it whole – finding those sounds that fit, and yet don't fit. They're just off, but they amplify the emotion. And when the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, you've got magic. It's the weirdest thing. Because of a sequence of somebody moving through time, because of this idea here, and that sound there, a word here, and then a look there when the music hits, people start crying. Or they start laughing hysterically, or they become very afraid. How does it work? It's *unbelievable*, the power of cinema.

But every ingredient has got to be right. Like in a symphony. You're just building and building. You're getting somewhere, but the pay-off is only going to happen because of what's gone before. You can't just have those chords come out of nothing. All the stuff that goes before it is leading to those things hitting in a certain way and then there's not a dry eye in the house. People are going *crazy* with emotion.

What about The Mystery Man? He reminded me of The Man From Another Place in Twin Peaks *– a representative from somewhere else.*
Yeah, he is. I don't want to say what he is to me, but he's a hair of an abstraction.

As an idea or element in Lost Highway *where did The Mystery Man come from?*
You know, it's a strange thing. I had an idea and I told this to Barry when we were writing. This guy's at a party. He's a wet-behind-the-

ears, innocent type. At the party there's another guy who's younger than he is, out of place, doesn't know anybody there, came with a girl who knows a lot of the people. The girl is actually drawing him into a strange thing, but he doesn't know it. And he starts talking to this young guy who says strange things to him, similar to what The Mystery Man says to Fred Madison. And Barry just lit up at this. And so that started the The Mystery Man in *Lost Highway.*

Another mystery that runs through the script concerns 'that night'. Characters refer to a significant and recent event in Pete Dayton's life that is never defined. This seems to have been played down in the finished film. Why is that?

When you read something in a script, that's one thing. You can read it softly and hide it, or skip it or worry about it later, but when it's said on the big screen it can be wrong. It becomes a hair more: something you have to deal with. It's too bad. Maybe if you make a thousand pictures and you really understand human nature and audience reaction and film, you know . . . But, at each stage you have chances to check those things, and, lo and behold, that's too much. So now it's felt, but it's not really referred to as much as in the script.

In the beginning a film is everything to all people. The script is interpretable, and you can make it work, but you don't know what the final thing will be. Investors take a chance. But when you see exactly what it is – it isn't anything else. It's not what you thought, necessarily. It could be better than you thought it would be or it could be something to worry about. And there's a lot of money at stake on pictures. So it's a very difficult time when the film is what it is, and you show it to the people who've paid for it. Or to audiences. It's the worst part of the whole process.

What's your favorite part of the process?

I like from the beginning all the way through to the release print. And then I don't like what happens after that because it's completely out of my control. I would love right now to have my next film ready and go right to work, and not deal with whatever happens. Good or bad. Because it has nothing really to do with me anymore. The film is the thing. I don't need to talk about it. I don't need to do anything. That is phoney stuff. The fine art of Phoney Baloney.